

Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society
ANNUAL SCOTTISH ALLOTMENTS CONFERENCE
21st CENTURY ALLOTMENTS

WORKSHOPS REPORTS:

1. Working with the local authorities

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What COSLA does:

- representative body for all 32 councils
- employers organisation for local councils
- facilitates sharing of best practice
- work to ensure service delivery is retained at the local level
- work with partner organisations and bodies such as the Scottish Executive and Scottish Parliament to deliver shared agendas especially sustainability (economic, environmental, social)
- influencing the development of the public policy framework at local, central and European levels to ensure implementation delivers on local priorities and in line with the political direction set by the political leadership of COSLA
- Address and influence key constitutional issues for Local Government; including Modernisation, Democratic Renewal. Structural Change and the status of Local Government
- Influence and protect the resourcing of Local Government by addressing issues of priorities, accountability, flexibility and resource deficit
- Contribute to the agenda on issues relating to Local Government as an employer, taking account of policy directions and linking to the national pay and conditions negotiations
- Promote the role, image and credibility of Local Government through media management, information and marketing of Local Government

What COSLA does not do:

- Require or direct councils to take particular actions/implement policies

How COSLA works:

- President, 3 VPs, 6 Spokespeople
- Executive Groups, Leaders Meetings, Convention
- COSLA Connections
- Officer Networks
- Briefings for members
- Respond to consultations
- Participate in working groups
- Disseminate information to members
- Events for sharing of best practice
- Develop partnerships
- Lobbying through the media and behind the scenes
- Negotiations, policy development and employers
- Reports to executive groups/leaders

How to find your local councillor:

- through your local council's website
- From your local council headquarters or your local library

How to find your local Community Planning Partnership:

- through your local council's website
- from your local council headquarters or your local library
- www.improvementservice.org.uk/communityplanning (useful links section)

Other links:

- www.communityplanning.net – general info on the concept of and best practice of community planning worldwide.
- www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk – for links to Community Planning Partnership Regeneration Outcome Agreements.

Pro-active Focus:

COSLA is a member responsive organisation so if you want COSLA to lobby on your behalf for useful legislative changes or the implementation of best practice you need elected members on side believing that your issues are important to achieving wider aims and outcomes. This is true on a collective COSLA basis as well as on an individual local authority basis.

What you can do to raise allotments issues up the political agenda:

- contact your local councillor to inform them of your concerns
- contact council officers currently working in allotments to inform them of your concerns
- attend meetings of your local community planning partnership and get involved in working groups on healthy living or older peoples issues to raise the profile of allotments and how they can contribute to these agendas
- participate in public consultations by your community planning partnership, local council and Scottish Executive on similar issues (information of these consultations should be publicised in your local paper)
- participate in the formation of your local community plan
- submit a petition to your local council
- submit press releases to local media
- participate in the work of the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society
- be helpful and accessible to local council officers in need of information or contacts

Discussion – summary of questions raised and advice from panel and participants.

1. Request from a local authority officer for book on Scottish Allotment law similar to the one for England. Advice: local authority officers can request COSLA/Scottish Executive to commission one.

2. Forum for local authority waste officers meets once a month – suggest forum and exchange network for allotment officers although not meeting so regularly. Advice: local authority officers can request COSLA to set up a body.

3. Further information and access to Community Planning Partnerships is needed. No plot-holders had heard of them. Advice: Associations and Federations should engage strongly with them and ask to be consulted on local issues.

4. Planning questions – if farmer gives or leases land for an allotment site does he need planning permission? Advice: consult Planning Aid - www.planning-aid-scotland.org.uk

5. Concerns – if Councils increase allotment provision by creating a new site can they close the existing site without an inquiry? Advice: consult the Community Planning Partnership for the area and also Planning Aid.

6. Need for all local authorities to have an Allotment Strategy. Only Edinburgh has one to date. Advice: Federations and Associations should lobby the local authorities to produce one. SAGS is lobbying the Scottish Executive and MSPs for a Scottish allotment strategy.

7. Concerns about leases – threat to sites. Advice: SAGS has selection leases from local authorities that can be used as good practice.